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THRU: General Manager

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIKINI RESETTLEMENT
PROGRAM

For your information, the Interior Department plans to issue the enclosed announcement on Bikini resettlement in the next day or two. The Division of Military Application is preparing an information paper detailing AEC's role in the cleanup of Bikini. The enclosed Interior Department announcement has been reviewed by the Divisions of Military Application, Operational Safety, and Biology and Medicine, and by the Offices of the Controller and the General Counsel.

John A. Harris, Director
Division of Public Information

Enclosure

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Department of the Interior

BIKINI RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM RELEASED

A further step toward the return of the Bikini people was taken when the President transmitted a budget request of \$1,700,000 for fiscal year 1970 for the cleanup of the atoll, the construction of housing and a village center for the first returnees, and the initiation of a replanting program designed to make the main islands of Bikini and Enyu once again productive.

The High Commissioner of the Trust Territories has been requested to move forward as rapidly as possible with the resettlement work," Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said.

Secretary Udall has released a resettlement program prepared by the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory with the assistance of personnel from the Atomic Energy Commission, the Defense Department and the Department of the Interior. The resettlement program is the direct result of a survey trip made to Bikini in late August following the President's announcement that the Bikini people could be returned. The survey trip was designed to develop basic information for planning a resettlement program.

The over-all resettlement of the Bikini people is planned to be phased over a six-year period, at an estimated cost of \$3,000,000. The first step, and the largest single cost element, is the clearing of the atoll of test-related debris and the clearing of scrub vegetation to permit replanting of coconuts and other food and commercial crops. Six months are estimated for the clean-up phase at a cost of approximately \$1,200,000.

A village center at the site of the original village is proposed in accordance with the wishes of the Bikini leaders. This will consist of a school, dispensary, church, and community facilities including warehousing. The Bikinians have expressed a preference for living on their own lands, rather than in the village, the High Commissioner has reported. Resettlement plans reflect this preference and call for the construction of housing units, including a house, cistern, cookhouse, copra crib and bath house. Thirty such units are planned for the first year with additional housing units planned at the rate of six each year through the end of the resettlement program.

Replanting will start immediately following the cleanup of the main islands of Bikini and Enyu. Since it takes from six to ten years for a coconut tree to mature and become productive, a feeding program will be required for returned families. The plan calls for tapering off such feeding assistance as the family's resources are improved. A major feature of the program will be the employment of Bikini people in the resettlement work.

The Bikini people were moved from their atoll in 1946 to permit nuclear testing. They were moved first to Rongerik, then Kwajalein and, then, to Kili, a single island in the southern Marshall Islands chain. Throughout their moves, they have retained a strong desire to return to Bikini. Nine of their leaders accompanied the High Commissioner to the atoll in August 1968, their first visit since they left the atoll more than 20 years ago.